CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system comprising:
   a. means, coupled to a network, for maintaining participant information comprising an identifier of a first participant;
   b. means, coupled to the network, for scheduling a conference, the conference being scheduled with the identifier of the first participant;
   c. a first site comprising a first means for coordinating a conference coupled to the network; and a plurality of first means for participating in a conference coupled to the network; and
   d. a second site comprising a second means for coordinating a conference coupled to the network; and a plurality of second means for participating in a conference coupled to the network; wherein:
   e. the first means for coordinating provides a first notice of a conference; notice being provided for assuring participation by the first participant at a particular first means for participating identified in the first notice; and
   f. the second means for coordinating provides a second notice of the conference for assuring participation by a second participant at a particular second means for participating identified in the second notice.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein:
   a. the means for maintaining participant information further comprises an identifier of the second participant;
   b. the means for scheduling schedules the conference with the identifier of the second participant; and
   c. the second notice comprises the identifier of the second participant.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for maintaining participant information comprises a jail management system and the identifier of the first participant identifies a prisoner of the jail.

4. The system of claim 3 wherein the second identifier identifies a visitor.

1   5. A system comprising:

2   a. means for communicating as a network;

3   b. a plurality of means for participating in a conference coupled to the means for

4 communicating, the plurality arranged with at least one site having a multiplicity of particular

5 means for participating of the plurality; and

6   c. means for coordinating a conference coupled to the means for communicating

7 and located at the site, wherein the means for coordinating provides notice to a participant for

8 directing the participant to a particular means for participating.

1   6. A system comprising:

2   a. means for communicating as a network;

3   b. means for operating a database comprising participant location information; the

4 means for operating coupled to the means for communicating; and

5   c. a plurality of sites, each site comprising:

6   (1) a respective multiplicity of first means, coupled to the means for

7 communicating, for participating in a conference; and

8   (2) a respective second means for coordinating a conference, the second

9 means physically distinct from the first means, the second means coupled to the means for

10 communicating; wherein

11   d. notice is provided to a participant to attend a conference, notice being provided

12 by a particular means for coordinating of a particular site determined in accordance with the

13 database to be nearest the participant at a time prior to the conference.

1   7. The system of claim 6 wherein the means for coordinating is operated by a person to

2 provide the notice, operation being without action by the participant.

1   8. The system of claim 6 wherein the means for coordinating is operated by a coordinator.

1   9. A system for conducting a conference, the system comprising:

2   a. means for communicating as a network; and

3   b. a plurality of means for coupling, each means being for coupling a respective

4   plurality of participant stations to the means for communicating; wherein each means for coupling

5   comprises:

6   (1) means for storing respective indicia of the conference, wherein indicia

7   of the conference comprise a start time and identification of participant stations of the respective

8   plurality for the conference; and

9   (2) means for initiating communication to conduct the conference,

10   communication being with the identified participant station; initiating being aborted if a signal is

11   not received by the means for initiating from the identified participant station within a period after

12   the start time.

1   10. The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises means for detecting

2   beginning use of the station by a participant; and the signal is provided by the means for detecting

3   when use by a participant is detected.

1   11. The system of claim 9 wherein:

2   a. the participant station comprises means for detecting beginning use of the station

3   by a participant;

4   b. the indicia of the conference further includes identification of a participant; and

5   c. the signal is provided by the means for detecting when use is begun by the

6   participant identified to the station in accordance with the indicia of the conference.

1   12. The system of claim 9 wherein the participant station comprises a handset and a hook

2   switch; and the signal is provided in accordance with operation of the hook switch.

1   13. A database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the

2   database comprising:

3   a. means for associating a conference identifier, a participant identifier, and indicia

4   of a physical location where the participant is expected for participation in the conference

5   corresponding to the conference identifier; and

6   b. means for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning,
7 conducting, and recording the conference.

1   14. The database of claim 13 wherein the participant is at least one of an inmate, a visitor
2 of the inmate, and a judge.

1   15. The database of claim 14 wherein the database further comprises:
2   a. second means for associating the identifier of the participant, an identifier of a
3 visitor, and indicia of a relationship of the participant and the visitor; wherein
4   b. the indicia of relationship describes at least one of a familial, employment,
5 representation, religious, and social relations.

1   16. A database for at least one of planning, conducting, and recording a conference, the
2 database comprising:
3   a. means for associating a conference identifier, an equipment identifier, and indicia
4 of a physical location where the equipment is expected for participation in the conference
5 corresponding to the conference identifier; and
6   b. means for accessing the association to accomplish at least one of planning,
7 conducting, and recording the conference.

1   17. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a plurality of sites, each site
2 including a multiplicity of participant stations and a control station, the system further comprising a
3 database for maintaining a tuple including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant, and
4 an identifier of a participant station, the method comprising:
5   a step for obtaining a notice at the control station of a site, the notice comprising the
6 conference identifier, the identifier of a participant, and the identifier of a participant station; and
7   a step for directing a participant to a participant station in accordance with the notice,
8 the participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant, the participant station
9 corresponding to the identifier of the participant station.

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1   18. The method of claim 17 wherein the participant performs the step for obtaining at a self

2   service station coupled to the network, the self service station comprising the control station.

1   19. The method of claim 17 wherein a conference coordinator performs the step for

2   directing.

1   20. The method of claim 19 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice

2   for a plurality of participants to be advised by the conference coordinator.

1   21. The method of claim 17 wherein the notice in the step for obtaining comprises notice

2   for a plurality of scheduled conferences involving the participant.

1   22. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant

2   stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a tuple

3   including a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant station, and an identifier of a

4   participant, the method comprising:

5   a step for detecting the unavailability of a first participant station of the multiplicity;

6   a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant station of the

7   multiplicity;

8   a step for obtaining confirmation that the alternate participant station is to be used in

9   the conference corresponding to the conference identifier;

10   a step for revising the tuple to exclude the first participant station and to include an

11   identifier of the alternate participant station to reschedule the conference;

12   a step for obtaining at the control station a notice that the conference associated with

13   the conference identifier is to commence, the notice in accordance with the revised tuple; and

14   a step for directing a participant corresponding to the identifier of the participant to

15   the alternate participant station in accordance with the notice.

1   23. The method of claim 22 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises at least

2   one of:

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3   a step for comparing a signal from a microphone to a first threshold to determine

4   unavailability;

5   a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a microphone to

6   determine unavailability;

7   a step for comparing a signal from a camera to a second threshold to determine

8   unavailability; and

9   a step for analyzing a signal to noise ratio of a signal from a camera to determine

10   unavailability.

1   24. The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting availability comprises:

2   a step for assuring that the notice will be timely as provided in accordance with at

3   least one of a transit time and a notification time associated with at least one of the identifier of the

4   participant and the identifier of the alternate participant station.

1   25. The method of claim 24 wherein the step for detecting unavailability comprises:

2   a step for detecting at least one of the unavailability of the participant associated

3   with the identifier of the participant and the unavailability of the first participant station in response

4   to detecting a change in value of at least one of a transit time and a notification time associated

5   with at least one of the identifier of the participant and the identifier of the first participant station.

1   26. A method for conducting a conference via a system having a multiplicity of participant

2   stations and a control station, the system further comprising a database for maintaining a first tuple

3   and a second tuple, the first tuple relating a conference identifier, an identifier of a participant

4   station, and an identifier of a participant, the second tuple relating the identifier of the participant

5   and a location of the participant, the method comprising:

6   a step for detecting a revision of the second tuple; and

7   a step for rescheduling the conference in accordance with the revised second tuple.

1   27. The method of claim 26 wherein the step for rescheduling comprises a step for

2   canceling the conference corresponding to the conference identifier of the first tuple.

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28. A method for conducting a conference via a system, the system including a multiplicity of participants and a database for maintaining a tuple of a conference identifier and an identifier of a first participant, the method comprising:

a step for detecting the unavailability of a participant corresponding to the identifier of the first participant;

a step for detecting the availability of an alternate participant; and

a step for revising the tuple to exclude the identifier of the first participant and to include an identifier of the alternate participant, to reschedule the conference.

29. The method of claim 28 wherein the first participant is at least one of a human participant, an equipment participant, a data participant, and a recorder channel.

30. A method for scheduling a conference in accordance with a request, the request comprising indicia of a plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of future times;

a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the first list including times after the start time;

a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of unavailable times;

a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;

a step for intersecting all participant availability lists to form an opportunity list; and

a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a selected item of the opportunity list.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein:

a. the step for scheduling comprises a step for posting to a database a record comprising a conference start time; and

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4   b. the step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list

5   of unavailable times comprises a step for obtaining a query result from the database.

1   32. The method of claim 30 wherein the step for forming a respective second list comprises

2   a step for assuring that times associated with lower ranking conferences are not excluded from the

3   second list.

1   33. The method of claim 30 for scheduling a first conference further comprising a step for

2   rescheduling a second conference after scheduling the first conference, the second conference

3   being rescheduled to eliminate a conflict with the first conference.

1   34. The method of claim 33 wherein scheduling of the first conference is conditional on

2   acceptance of a score based on at least one of:

3   a. a count of the total number of conferences that would have conflicts with at least

4   one of the schedule of the first conference and the schedule of any rescheduled conference;

5   b. a count of the total number of at least one of coordinators and participants

6   associated with the first conference and any rescheduled conference; and

7   c. a transit time associated with at least one of a participant of the first conference

8   and a participant of any rescheduled conference.

1   35. A method for scheduling a conference among stations of a plurality in accordance with

2   a first request formed at a first station of the plurality, the first request comprising indicia of a

3   plurality of participants and a start time, the method comprising:

4   a step for maintaining for each participant of the plurality a respective first list of

5   future times;

6   a step for sending a second request to a second station of the plurality, the second

7   request comprising indicia of at least one particular participant of the plurality of participants and

8   the start time;

9   a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective sublist of the

10   first list including times after the start time;

11   a step for forming for each participant of the plurality a respective second list of

12 unavailable times;

13   a step for intersecting for each participant of the plurality the respective first list

14 and the respective second list to form a respective availability list;

15   a step for receiving a response to the second request, the response comprising an

16 availability list of the particular participant;

17   a step for intersecting all participant availability lists including the availability list

18 of the particular participant to form an opportunity list;

19   a step for forming a proposed schedule of the conference in accordance with a

20 selected item of the opportunity list;

21   a step for providing a notice to the second station in accordance with the proposed

22 schedule; and

23   a step for scheduling the conference in accordance with a response to the notice.

1 36. A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a

2 database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for

3 inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the

4 method comprising:

5   a step for recalling from the database a start time for a conference;

6   a step for detecting use of the respective means for inputting audio of each station;

7 and

8   a step for coupling the conference participant stations for the video conference in

9 accordance with whether use was detected at each station within a respective predetermined time

10 that includes the start time.

1 37. The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises:

2   a step for presenting a notice at each station that the station has been scheduled

3 for the conference; and

4   a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to begin using

5 the means for inputting audio.

1   38. The method of claim 36 wherein the method further comprises a step for revising the

2   start time in accordance with failing to detect use of the respective means for inputting audio of

3   each station within the respective predetermined time.

1   39. The method of claim 36 wherein:

2   a. the database is stored in part at each station; and

3   b. the step for recalling is accomplished at each station with reference to a

4   respective part of the database.

1   40. A method for conducting a video conference by a system, the system including a

2   database and at least two conference participant stations, each station comprising means for

3   inputting audio and means for detecting use by the participant of the means for inputting audio, the

4   method comprising:

5   a step for determining an end time of a conference in accordance with the

6   database;

7   a step for displaying at each station a remaining duration of the conference; and

8   a step for decoupling the conference participant stations to discontinue video

9   conferencing in accordance with the end time.

1   41. The method of claim 40 wherein the step for displaying a remaining duration displays a

2   continuously updated remaining duration.

1   42. The method of claim 40 wherein:

2   a. the database is stored in part at each station; and

3   b. the step for determining an end time is accomplished at each station with

4   reference to a respective part of the database.

1   43. The method of claim 40 further comprising:

2   a step for presenting at each station an instruction for a participant to cease using

3   the means for inputting audio; and

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4   a step for presenting at each station an instruction for the participant to leave the

5   station.